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Employment Relations Podcast #5 - Christmas Party Pitfalls

In episode 5 of our Employment Law For The Time Poor podcast Emily Haar and Erin McCarthy discuss how to survive the office holiday party as a HR practitioner

As the festive season ramps up, Emily Haar, Senior Associate, and Erin McCarthy, Partner, give practical insights and tips for managing the annual holiday party as a HR practitioner, including the following checklist:

1. Ensure that your workplace health and safety, bullying, harassment and anti-discrimination policies and codes of conduct are up-to-date. Remind employees that the policies apply at social functions and that there are disciplinary consequences if required standards of behaviour are not met.
2. Give employees information about the transport options to get home from the event. Encourage staff who are not sure how to get home to discuss this with you before the event. Consider providing a mini-bus or cab-charge vouchers, particularly to employees who have been drinking.
3. Tell staff when the function will end and make sure it ends at that time.
4. Ensure appropriate people are appointed and are able to intervene if they spot bad behaviour. Managers should set an example of appropriate conduct.
5. Send an internal memo to all employees reminding everyone of the company's policies and codes of conduct, and make it clear that they will apply at social functions. You should also outline the disciplinary consequences if required standards of behaviour are not met. Consider attaching a copy of each of the policies to the memo.
6. If alcohol is available at the event, ensure it is served responsibly and that food and non-alcoholic drinks are readily available. Remind employees that they are expected to consume alcohol responsibly. If you wish to have greater control over consumption of alcohol, you can consider using drink tokens, or limiting the time in which drinks can be served.
7. If inappropriate behaviour is reported, investigate and follow up on it promptly as set out in your company's policies.
8. If your party is expected to have large numbers attending, you may want to consider having professional security that can watch for unsafe or inappropriate behaviour, and can also ensure only those invited to attend can make their way into the function.

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